



2006 Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Customer Focus

Shellfish Aquaculture Management Program

The Rhode Island NRCS Shellfish Aquaculture Management Program turns one year old on April 24, 2007. Financial assistance to aquaculture growers, including shellfish farms, was authorized through the 2002 Farm Bill in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) final rule, stating "Livestock means animals produced for food or fiber such as dairy cattle, beef cattle, poultry, turkeys, swine, sheep, horses, fish and other animals raised by aquaculture." This voluntary component of EQIP was introduced to Rhode Island shellfish farmers for the 2006 fiscal year through a new practice standard titled "Shellfish Aquaculture Management" and since that time the program has grown tremendously.

In the first year alone, approximately \$280,000 was obligated for conservation practices on 11 shellfish farms across Rhode Island. This represents 40% of the all the growers in the state. To date, 56% of practices planned for 2006 have been implemented or installed and by the end of April, 77% of practices planned with in the first year will have been implemented. In addition, 30% of practices scheduled for 2007 have been completed resulting in 9% of practices being implemented ahead of schedule.

Rhode Island Summary

Overview

Despite Rhode Island's small size, agriculture in the state is as diverse as in our neighboring states. The EQIP program addresses problems that reflect that diversity. While there are over 800 farming operations in Rhode Island, a state with just over 600,000 total acres, many of these farms are operated by producers who work full-time off the farm. As such, NRCS has worked with its partners to develop the EQIP program to meet the needs of both the full-time commercial farmers as well as the smaller "hobby" farms that are becoming more common. NRCS has benefited Rhode Island's natural resources by installing: improved irrigation systems that conserve water, alternate sources of water for large volume irrigators that enhance riparian systems; comprehensive nutrient management systems that include waste storage, land application, and fencing; and a variety of land management practices to protect water quality.

Accomplishments

In 2006, Rhode Island experienced a large jump in both the number and financial value of EQIP applications. Fortunately, with the passage of the 2002 Farm Bill, we were able to meet many of those requests. Fifty-five new contracts were selected for funding from the 99 applications received, at an average cost of approximately \$67,000 per contract, obligating over \$3,690,000 of federal cost share assistance. The vast majority of the contracts address livestock related concerns, such as manure storage and fencing animals out of wet areas. Several contracts also address irrigation water management systems, including the source of water, delivery of water to the field, and application of water. Many other contracts address erosion control on cropland and forestland.

Outlook

Deer abound on Rhode Island's farms and forests, yet the suburban nature of many communities restricts hunting. Deer predation on farm crops results in significant losses to agricultural producers. As such, the EQIP program will be expanded to allow for fencing high value crops. Continued funding for EQIP in Rhode Island will help ensure their ability to farm profitably. In addition, EQIP will be enhanced to provide greater opportunities to private forest landowners and tribes to enhance wildlife habitat, control invasive species and improve natural regeneration of high value or culturally significant species. We look forward to more aquaculture farms applying for EQIP. We can't forget that in 2007, there will be a new Farm Bill, the bill plans to consolidate a few of our conservation programs.

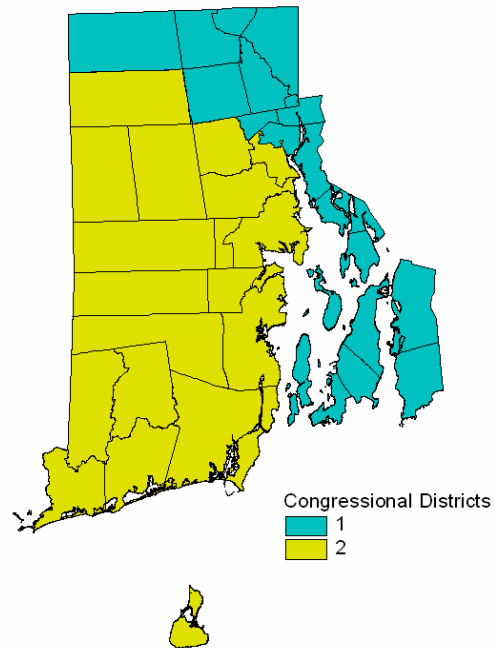


Aquaculture Sites

State Contact:

Michael Moorman, EQIP Program Manager
USDA NRCS, 60 Quaker Lane, Suite 46, Warwick, RI 02886
Phone 401.822.8820, Fax 401.828.0433, www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov

Rhode Island's EQIP Dollars and Contracts by Congressional District



Congressional Districts	Fiscal Year 2006		Cumulative Total (97-06)	
	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts
District 1	\$1,868,700	22	\$4,303,527	77
District 2	\$1,824,200	33	\$4,124,386	110
State Totals	\$3,692,900	55	\$8,427,913	187

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.